SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

LANSING, MICHIGAN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE January 27, 2006

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Senate Democrats Renew Call to Republicans to Act on Big Oil

LANSING—Citing Governor Granholm's charge to the state Legislature to echo her message during Wednesday's State of the State Address to President Bush and National Republics to put caps on oil profits, Senate Democrats today renewed their call to Senate Transportation Committee Chair Jud Gilbert (R-Algonac) to take up their resolution asking the United States Congress to address the exorbitant energy costs plaguing family budgets this winter.

"Our poor and vulnerable are crying out for help, not to mention the effect a \$400 bill has on a middle-income budget," said Sen. Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek), sponsor of the resolution. "We can't do this all at the state level. For the economic health of our state, the Transportation Committee must take up our resolution. The federal government should hear our concerns."

Long term planning at the state level will eventually play a marginal part in lower gas prices, but there is little the state can do in the short run. The most recent federal energy bill was filled with billions of dollars in tax cuts and loopholes for Big Oil. Consequently, energy producers are seeing record profits while families are asked to bear the entire burden of any increased production costs.

Midwest gas prices are up over 20% of where they were at this time last year, and gas prices have not dropped below \$2 per gallon since last March. Additionally, the fuel prices paid early this fall were even more extreme. Prices are on their way up again, and there is no indication that they will fall anytime soon.

"Many Michigan families are forced to pay \$30 to \$35 dollars two or three times a week to fill their cars with gas," said Sen. Ray Basham (D-Taylor). "That's \$400 per month! Prices have gone up, but incomes certainly haven't. This is a prime example of why we need to work to increase incomes for our working families, especially those living on minimum wage."

"This is a national crisis," said Schauer. "It's time for Congress to do something, but they must receive pressure from the state level. That's what we're trying to do here, but we are getting no cooperation."